Sadlier Religion

Catholic Saints with December Feast Days

RESOURCE KIT

Catholic Saints With December Feast Days

Feast days are an opportunity to remember and be inspired by the lives of holy people and the saints, who are examples of holiness for us today. Read and share these short biographies of holy people whose feast days are celebrated during the month of December. Catechists can share the simple printable activities that follow with their students to complete, or families can complete the activities together. Learning about and celebrating the lives of the saints is a great way for families to share and grow in their Catholic faith any and every day of the year.

In this kit you'll find short biographies and printable activities for these Catholic saints with December feast days:

- Saint Nicholas of Myra
- Saint Juan Diego

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Saint Nicholas of Myra

On December 6, the Church celebrates the feast day of Saint Nicholas of Myra.

Saint Nicholas of Myra is one of the most recognized saints in the world. He is honored as the patron saint of Greece and Russia. It has been speculated that besides Mary, the Mother of God, Saint Nicholas's image has been painted and drawn the most by Christian artists. Despite his popularity, we know almost nothing about Nicholas's life.

We know Saint Nicholas was the Bishop of Myra, a city on the southern coast of modern-day Turkey. Traditional accounts say that Nicholas grew up as the only son of devoted Christian parents. His mother and father died when he was young, and Nicholas inherited a large fortune. He decided to use this money to help the many people he saw around him who were in need. He also decided to perform these acts of charity quietly, even secretly, and not to brag about them. According to early accounts, the Holy Spirit inspired the clergy and the people of Myra to appoint Nicholas as their bishop because of his goodness and acts of charity.

Legends of Saint Nicholas abound. One of the most famous involves the kindly saint leaving bags of gold on the doorstep of a poor family, thus providing the daughters with dowries so that they could marry. Some stories say that he dropped that bag of gold down the chimney so that it would land on the hearth below. This was more than a matchmaking venture, but rather one that spared the impoverished girls from being sold into slavery.

Today, Saint Nicholas is known as a gift-giver all around the world. But we no longer think of "Saint Nick" as a kindly bishop. Over the centuries and across the continents, we now know "Saint Nick" as "Santa Claus." Saint Nicholas is an example of kindness and generosity for us today. This year, as we prepare for Christmas, we should remember Nicholas's quiet acts of selfless charity as we give our Christmas gifts.

The candy cane is a Christmas treat associated with Saint Nicholas. The distinctive candy cane shape is attributed to a 17th century German choirmaster, who bent the candy into the form of a shepherd's staff and gave it to children attending church services. The crook symbolizes the gentle image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. As shepherd of his people, a bishop carries a hookshaped staff called a crosier. Since Saint Nicholas was also a bishop, the candy cane serves as a perfect symbol for this patron and protector of children.

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Saint Juan Diego

On December 9, the Church celebrates the feast day of Saint Juan Diego.

Saint Juan Diego, born Cuauhtlatohauc ("the eagle who speaks"), was born in present-day Mexico near Mexico City during the Age of Exploration. Juan Diego was raised in the Aztec pagan religion. Although a poor Indian, he was able to provide for himself by working in the fields and weaving mats.

When the Spanish arrived in Mexico in 1519, so did missionaries wanting to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to the native Mexicans. Juan Diego was from a region that had well-developed cultures, which were very different from those of European explorers. These differences often led to harsh treatment of the indigenous people. Many missionaries, however, wanted to only improve the conditions for the native people and teach them of Jesus Christ.

Juan Diego first learned about Jesus Christ through the stories and teachings of missionaries. The preachings of Jesus Christ inspired Juan Diego and his wife to be baptized. He was baptized "Juan Diego" in 1524.

During his life, Juan Diego wanted to learn more about his faith. Twice a week, he and his wife, Maria Lucia, walked fourteen miles to Mass and religious instruction. When he traveled, Juan Diego often wore a tilma, a rough cloak made from cloth of woven cactus fibers. The cloak protected him against the cold evenings and early mornings.

On December 9, 1531, Juan Diego was on his way to church when he heard sweet music playing. He followed the heavenly music to the top of a hill where encountered a beautiful lady. She was dressed as an Aztec noblewoman. She called him by name and spoke in his own language. The woman told him she was Mary, Mother of Christ, and that she had a special task for him. He was to tell the bishop that she wanted a shrine to be built in that very spot. She wanted to show her "love, compassion, help, and protection" for all the people.

Juan Diego thought that the bishop would doubt such a request from a poor man like him, but he did as the Lady asked. The bishop did not believe Juan Diego at first. The bishop asked for a sign from the Ladythat she was Mary, the Mother of God. In response to the bishop's request, the Lady had Juan Diego fill his tilma with roses. Since it was December, it was amazing that these roses were blooming! So Juan Diego presented the roses to the bishop. There, imprinted on the tilma, was a picture of Mary as she had last appeared.

A small chapel was quickly built on the hill where Mary had appeared. The church was dedicated to Mary. Juan Diego lived in a small house nearby for the rest of his life. He cared for the church and those who visited it. He continued to share the story of Mary's great sign of her love for the people of Mexico and all people.

St. Juan Diego was beatified on May 6, 1990 by Pope John Paul II and canonized on July 31, 2002. His feast day is celebrated on December 9 and he is the patron saint of Indigenous people.

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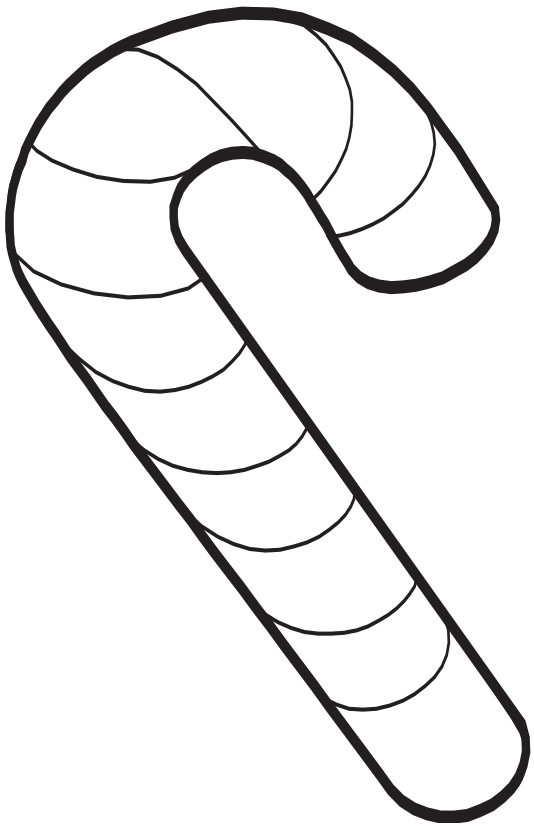
Name _____

Saint Nicholas of Myra

The Christmas candy cane may have come from celebrations of Saint Nicholas Day.

Because Saint Nicholas was a bishop, he carried a gold shepherd's crook. The candy cane is made in the same shape as the shepherd's crook.

Color in the candy cane below using red and white markers, crayons, paint, or pencils. Then, cut out the candy cane.



Give your finished candy cane to a friend or a family member as a gift in honor of Saint Nicholas. When you give them this gift, tell them the story of Saint Nicholas.

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Name _____

Saint Nicholas of Myra

Saint Nicholas of Myra was known for his generosity and charity to others in need. Nicholas wanted to do good things for others without being recognized for it.

Choose three family members or friends you'd like to help this week. On the lines below, write the name of the three people who you will do something good for. On the line beside each name, write the action you will take. You might choose to help by doing a chore, giving a small gift, or saying a prayer for each person.

1. _____ _____

2. _____ _____

3. _____ _____

This week, do these good deeds you've planned for each person. Do them quietly without expecting recognition. Remember Saint Nicholas as you complete each action.

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Name _____

Saint Juan Diego

During Juan Diego's life, many Mexican people were not treated with respect. When Mary appeared to Juan Diego, she spoke to him in his own language, reminding him that she was his Mother. She gave him a remarkable picture to remind us of her role in showing us God's love. We are also called to treat each other with respect.

In each space, draw a picture or write about a way to show respect.

Respect for God

Respect for Myself

Respect for Others

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Name _____

Saint Juan Diego

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We are all called to treat each other with respect. In the chart, list typical situations during your day in which you interact with others. This may be at school, at home, during practice, etc. Then list ways in which you can show respect for others in each situation.

Situation	Ways to Show Respect

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